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THE REGIONAL COUNCIL OF SOUTHWEST FINLAND'S STATEMENT ON THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S PREPARATORY DOCUMENT OF THE CONSULTATION CONCERNING THE FUTURE POLICY FOR THE TRANS-EUROPEAN TRANSPORT NETWORK

The Baltic Sea separates Finland from the central market areas of the EU. The development of land-sea-land transport chains is crucial for improving the fluency of Finland's foreign trade transports. It is important for Finland that the central market areas of the EU can be reached cost-efficiently. Finland's remote location and long distance to the main market areas, as well as the small population, severe climate conditions and great dependence on sea transport in foreign trade set challenges for the development of traffic infrastructure and logistics systems. In the defining and development of TEN-T network the special conditions of each country should be taken into account to secure competitiveness.

One of the goals of defining the currently valid TEN-T network has been to create connections to peripheral areas that are difficult to reach and to enhance social and regional togetherness. The Regional Council of Southwest Finland thinks that the criterion of economic profitability must not be the only priority, but social, economic and regional cohesion should also be emphasised.

The Baltic Sea is a sensitive ecosystem. On the one hand, the Baltic Sea plays a major role in the transport system of the area, and it still has unused potential in the transport system of the area. In the development of the transport system in the Baltic Sea area, however, environmental aspects are particularly significant. The increasing traffic presents challenges to the safety of sea traffic. Innovations in the intelligent transport system, such as systems for automatic monitoring of vessels to improve safety at sea, are necessary and their inclusion in the core network is justified.

Border States such as Finland have common interests in developing connections to third countries. In the case of Finland, connections to Russia play a key role. In the Baltic Sea area the east-west traffic corridors in particular require further development. The Traffic Corridor of Central Europe-Scandinavia-Stockholm-Southwest Finland-Russia-Asia is a good example of a fluent, reliable and competitive transport chain (land-sea-land), whose existing connections should be improved and the use of the route intensified. In other words, the current TEN-T priority projects, the Nordic Triangle and the Motorway of the Baltic Sea are still topical and their inclusion in the core network is justified.



The member states carry the main responsibility for the development of the TEN-T network and the implementation of the priority projects, and consequently, the network projects shall serve the purposes of the member states and carry out national development goals. As there is no significant conflict between the national and EU traffic priorities, the implementation of traffic projects is better scheduled and easier to anticipate.

Connecting peripheral areas closely to Central Europe through the TEN-T network and connections to third countries are significant regarding e.g. raw material and energy supply in the future.

The severe, exceptional conditions and special requirements in providing traffic connections due to the country's northern location emphasise the need for a sufficiently dense network. It will guarantee the service level of the network and enable flexible and alternative transport routes and optimisation of costs according to transport needs. Flexibility and optimisation enhance energy efficiency and are recommended from the environmental policy's point of view.

The procedure of defining the core network must be transparent and objective and treat all parties equally. When defining the TEN-T network there is no reason for ranking the ports. This would only confirm the present situation, and not take into account the development opportunities of secondary ports.

REGIONAL COUNCIL OF SOUTHWEST FINLAND

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